



FEMA

Publix Powers Up When the Power Goes Down

Punta Gorda, FL - When a disaster causes essential businesses such as gas stations, banks and grocery stores to shut down, even for a short time, the resulting problems can be dramatic for hard-hit communities. Publix Super Markets, Inc., resolved to take steps to keep its grocery stores open by installing super-sized generators at nearly half of its stores.

Before the 2004 storms, every store was equipped with a 65-kilowatt backup generator that could power emergency lighting, limited refrigeration and security systems. But during power interruptions, affected stores often lost most, if not all, of their perishable stock.

"We were out of power for nine days after Hurricane Charley," said Mark Royer, a store manager in Punta Gorda. "Even though we were able to sell non-perishable items, we felt helpless that we couldn't provide families with produce or necessities, such as milk for the babies or insulin for diabetics."

Publix decided to install 500-kilowatt generators at 360 store locations. The generators were designed to operate for a minimum of 72 hours, far exceeding the 23-hour average of the current 65-kilowatt backup generators. The supermarket chain's plan also included an additional 40 portable 500-kilowatt generators to cover the stores that would not receive the permanent equipment.

The two-phase project was conceived following the tumultuous 2004 hurricane season that forced many grocery stores to close. Announced in May 2006, the plan became a reality with the initial installation of 34 super-sized generators. Publix expected all 400 generators to be in place by July 2007.

Publix includes community recovery as part of its corporate mission and has invested more than \$100 million in the generator program. "We're not seeking any financial assistance for this project. We simply want to be there for the communities we serve," director of media relations Maria Brous said.

Scott Collins, a grocery clerk at the Punta Gorda store, said he knows that the new generators will give the stores the best chance to stay open following a disaster, and understands what that means to the community.

"We opened the doors the day after Charley, and the people started coming in right away," Collins said. "Two people turned into twenty as soon as they heard we were open. Even though we weren't able to provide them with everything they needed, it was really great to be there for them ... whether it was to give them their groceries or for them to have someone to talk to."



State-wide,
Florida



Quick Facts

Sector:

Private

Cost:

Amount Not Available

Primary Activity/Project:

Utility Protective Measures

Primary Funding:

Business Owner